

'Trishna' makes maritime history

Bombay, Dec. 22 (AP) — Braving high speed winds, treacherous gales and a nasty storm, a group of 10 valiant officers of the Corps of Engineers have already made maritime history, sailing their fibreglass yacht "Trishna" in a global sea adventure.

The 37-foot-long "Trishna", which set sail from Bombay harbour on Sept. 28, has already logged 7,500 nautical miles and is now sailing to Natal 15 days ahead of schedule.

From Natal, they will sail to Belém in Brazil, Surinam, Barbados, Jamaica, Panama, Glapagos Island, Tahiti, Auckland, Sydney, through the Torres Straits to Jakarta, Singapore, Colombo, hoping to be back in Bombay by March 1987.

The officers encountered their first challenge when the fragile but seaworthy yacht was hit by gales producing 20 feet high waves, as a result of a cyclonic disturbance on the Andhra coastlines. Unnerved, they reached Maldives on Oct. 17 and sailed off without much ado after filling water and buying fresh provisions.

The expedition crossed the Equator on Oct. 12, exactly a year

after they left Gosport in the United Kingdom on the journey to Bombay and entered the region noted for several shipping disasters in the days when merchantmen sailed the world.

After sailing two days in his region without any wind, they drifted 320 nautical miles along with equatorial current before picking up good winds again.

There were moments of concern and anxiety as the yacht went out of radio contact near the Madagascar coast. A gale had temporarily disturbed the electrical systems and some safety equipment, including a danbuoy and horseshoe buoy were lost.

The worst was yet to come and as soon as "Trishna" rounded Cape Agulhas it encountered the worst storm thus far on its voyage. The storm came unannounced with tremendous fury. High winds upto 70 knots and 30 feet high waves locked the men and their vessel in a grim struggle for survival, against nature for nearly 18 hours.

The storm took its toll in the end. The men lost their second horseshoe buoy and the electronic speed log. Their high frequency radio set and aerials were also damaged, snapping

communications between Bombay and the yacht.

The communications, which were excellent till then, remained disturbed as the yacht rounded the Cape. However, the VHF set was working and the crew maintained communications with contact ships and nearby coastal radio stations.

The crewmen were reminded of the rough weather they had in the Bay of Biscay and the Mediterranean Sea in October-November last year when they were sailing from the United Kingdom to Bombay.

The crew were exhausted. They kept hoping for the best and sure enough an encouraging south east trade wind led them to St. Helena island on Dec. 2, still 13 days ahead. At times, "Trishna" did almost 160 nautical miles per day, making her the first Indian yacht to sail non-stop around the Cape of Good Hope and perhaps the only yacht to sail the Cape for over three centuries since Vasco da Gama.

The last stop on the current leg was Ascension Island, whose shores "Trishna" left on Dec. 17. The crew hope to reach Natal by December end, clocking an additional 1,240 nautical miles.